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SUBJECT: SUPREME LEADER'S SON: THE POWER BEHIND THE ROBES?

REF: A. RPO DUBAI 0016; B. RPO DUBAI 0014; C. RPO DUBAI 0012

CLASSIFIED BY: Jillian L. Burns, Director, Iran Regional
Presence Office, Dubai, UAE.
REASON: 1.4 (d)

1.(S/NF) Summary: An Iranian doctor, reportedly very close to conservative circles in Iran, claimed that the Supreme Leader's son Mojtaba holds extremist views and wields significant influence in the Supreme Leader's office. The doctor indicated that while Mojtaba essentially derives his power from his father's position, he is building his own power base. The Supreme Leader allegedly has begun chemotherapy, after resisting the treatment for some time. This is a single source account and his direct access to such information cannot be confirmed but is credible. End summary

2.(S/NF) An Iranian doctor who reportedly is close to conservative circles in Iran, particularly former Foreign Minister Velayati, told IRPO Director May 7 that Supreme Leader's son Mojtaba plays a direct -- and negative -- role in Iranian policy-making. The source's views on nuclear negotiator Mousavian's arrest and other views on the domestic situation to be provided septel.

Influence of Supreme Leader's son

3.(S/NF) The doctor claims that Supreme Leader Khamenei's son Mojtaba is exercising real power over his father's decision-making. The source said Mojtaba is around 33 and the third of four sons. He claims Mojtaba is a true hardliner, a former student of Ansar-e Hizballah leader Hussein Allah Karam, although not a member of the group himself. He reportedly studied theology but does not wear cleric's clothing. According to the source, Mojtaba is the only son of the Supreme Leader who is active in politics.

4.(S/NF) The doctor, who describes himself as religious conservative, said Mojtaba has the type of extremist mindset that cannot be persuaded towards pragmatism. The doctor blamed Mojtaba for much of what he saw as the negative aspects of Iran's policy. The source gave no indication that Mojtaba's

grip on power was lessening. When IRPO director raised US certainty of Iran's assistance to groups attacking US soldiers in Iraq later in the conversation, the doctor inferred that Mojtaba is likely driving Iran's Iraq policy. He contrasted Mojtaba with IRGC Commander Safavi, who the source believes is a much more pragmatic actor.

Power linked to father's?

5.(S/NF) The doctor said that Mojtaba mostly derives his power from his father, and he would likely lose this power if his father departs the scene. The doctor claimed that the Supreme Leader is now undergoing chemotherapy, after earlier refusing the treatment out of fear that people would see evidence of his illness, and that he has switched to a vegetarian diet. (Comment: One press report noted Mojtaba as a possible replacement for his father, although no contacts have mentioned this possibility. End comment)

6.(S/NF) The doctor cautioned, however, that Mojtaba has reportedly worked to shore up his own political base over the past 10 years, installing associates from Mashhad into positions of authority (NFI). These people reportedly remain loyal to Mojtaba and have developed "specialized" skills, making them hard to replace.

King-maker?

7.(S/NF) Although Mojtaba holds no formal position, the source claimed that even ministers who go to the "Beit," as the office of the Supreme Leader is called, are deferential to Mojtaba. The doctor says the Beit suffers from the worst type of hypocrisy. He claims Mojtaba often acts without his father's foreknowledge, but his father indulges him and protects him. Allegedly, the Supreme Leader was furious a few years ago when he learned his phone was being monitored, but when he found out his son was responsible, he let it pass.

8.(S/NF) The doctor claimed, without citing sources, that Mojtaba decided that the Beit would switch its backing to Ahmadi-Nejad for president when Mojtaba could not come to an agreement with first choice candidate Mohammad-Baqer Qalibaf over who would get positions in the new government. However, Ahmadi-Nejad reportedly broke some of his promises to Mojtaba, as he has to other supporters (Note: See Ref D citing the same source. Endnote), and the two are no longer on good terms. The doctor also claimed that Mojtaba secured for his father-in-law Qolam Ali Haddad-Adel the position of Majles speaker, despite a lack of qualifications.

9.(S/NF) Comment: The doctor, a supporter of the regime but a critic of Ahmadi-Nejad, clearly sees Mojtaba as a negative influence on Iranian policy. He said that generally people in Iran accept the fact that "Aghazadeh" or sons of clerics will profit from their connections and enrich themselves in business, but Iranians are uncomfortable seeing them accrue a political role in the Islamic Republic. We note that this is a single source report about Mojtaba Khamenei, and other contacts have not mentioned him as an important source of power in Iran. We will pulse other contacts to check for collaboration.
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